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TO WHAT EXTENT DOES POLICE OCCUPATIONAL CULTURE IMPACT ON THE SOCIAL AND DOMESTIC LIVES OF POLICE OFFICERS?

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Abstract

Since the establishment of the new police service in 1829 there has been much research in to the influence of police-culture on the cognitive and behavioural responses of police officers. This article seeks to take a more expansive view of police occupational culture by discussing the extent to which it has an impact, not only within the occupational environment but furthermore on the social and domestic lives of police officers. This research has reviewed the literature surrounding police culture and the occupational impacts of policing on domestic and social life. By adopting a qualitative approach using semi-structured interviews, it analyses the extent to which police culture can be seen to impact on the lives of police officers. It concludes by suggesting that a larger scale study in this area may be beneficial in order to create a more comprehensive view of the extensive impacts of police culture both inside and outside the occupational environment.

Keywords: police culture, police occupational culture, police personality

Introduction

This article links academic literature to primary research in order to create a picture of the ways in which police culture has an impact on the lives of police officers both inside and outside the occupational environment. The researcher's interest in this area developed as a result of undertaking voluntary work as a special constable prior to this project. During this time the researcher developed an awareness of the presence of police culture within the occupational environment, but sought to investigate the effects of police culture on a wider scale. This article therefore intends to provide a less critical view of police culture than has been presented in previous

research and seeks to explore how officers integrate their occupational and personal lives. Reiner (1985: 85) stated that 'an understanding of how police officers see the social world and their role in it – "cop culture" – is crucial to an analysis of what they do'. Although there are several definitions of police culture, Reiner's definition is most applicable to this research as it identifies police culture as the way in which officers view the world. This research is based on the notion that the way in which officers view their occupational environment and their perspective of the world outside of this environment cannot be completely separated.

The literature review discusses research by Skolnick (1966) which is particularly significant when discussing the idea of a police personality. Skolnick suggested that police officers have distinct cognitive and behavioural responses as a result of their working environment. The review furthermore considers the relevance of police culture and the associated cultural characteristics in shaping the cognitive and behavioural responses of police officers as well as examining occupational studies that show links between the working and social and domestic lives of police officers. The findings and analysis of this research identify the key ways in which police culture can be seen to impact on the social and domestic lives of police officers. The analysis focuses upon the key areas in which literature has shown police culture to have an impact, namely; personal identity, social life, family life and living environment.

In order to conduct the research, a qualitative approach was chosen that utilised semi-structured interviews. To investigate the research aims it was necessary to uncover the meanings police officers gave to explain the way in which they interacted within their social and family environments (Davies, Francis and Jupp, 2011). The interview guide was centred upon the four themes of; identity, social life, family life and living environment. The interviews were conducted using a sample of seven regular police officers from two police stations in Devon and Cornwall that responded to a general email requesting their participation. Three participants were from a more rurally located station and four were from a station in an urban area. Two of the officers interviewed were female and five were male. There was a variation in years of service ranging from two to twenty. Out of the seven officers interviewed two possessed the rank of sergeant, one male and one female. The other five were at the rank of constable. As the officers interviewed were only at the rank of sergeant or below it is important to recognise that the results are not representative of the entire police population and their generalizability is therefore limited. The resulting interview

data was categorised in to themes and then presented as such in the findings and analysis (Gilbert, 2001). The research was conducted following the ethical guidelines laid out by Plymouth University and in accordance with The British Society of Criminology Code of Ethics on the responsibilities of the researcher.

1 Literature Review

1.1 *A Historical Comparison*

The new police service, established by Sir Robert Peel in 1829 was by his intention, 'centrally controlled, uniformed watchmen with a rigid work discipline geared for supervising the streets and preventing crime' (Newburn, 2003). Although there have been fluid changes in methods since the new police service was established, significant continuities can be seen in the expectations placed upon officers in the 1800s and the modern day officer. Officers are still required to show high levels of integrity and morality conducive to a career in a position of responsibility and trust today as they were two centuries ago (Metropolitan Police, 2010).

Peel acknowledged that a police service attempting to exert its authority by force was likely to meet much resistance from the public and he therefore created an unarmed service that policed by consent (Waddington, 1993). However, over the following century, Peel's initial intentions became lost amongst attempts to establish new legitimate and publically supported regimes that focused on 'technology, specialisation and managerial professionalism' as keys to reducing crime (Reiner, 1992:76). In 1967, the Home Office began to encourage all forces to reduce the number of officers on foot patrol and increase the number of officers patrolling in cars in order to make policing more efficient. This was in response to continually increasing levels of crime and the fact that policing was more effective this way as officers could respond much faster to calls.

Although this measure was designed to improve police-community relations, in practice they actually began to deteriorate (Newburn, 2003). Holdaway (1983) attributed this decline in relations partly to a police culture that undermined the service element of the police and instead focused on the potential opportunities for crime fighting and action. It was this deterioration in public satisfaction that led to the reintegration of community policing. John Alderson first developed community policing in the 1980s in response to 'police alienation', which he believed posed the

greatest threat to the freedom of policing (Brain, 2010:41). Modern day policing acknowledges that public confidence and witness information are central in providing an effective police service and reducing crime. However, Newburn (2003:200) postulates that although joining officers may commit to the service with ideals based on serving the public, these conceptions are quickly transformed into notions of 'real policing' and crime fighting. Although in theory efforts towards a community orientated approach appear to be well underway (for example the recent implementation of PCSOs), modern research has begun to question the significance of police culture in the progression towards a community based approach.

1.2   *A Police Personality?*

Skolnick (1966) was one of the first authors to introduce the notion of a police personality. He acknowledged that perceived similarities in the mindsets of officers did not mean that one officer's personality was indistinguishable from the next, rather that there are consistencies between officers and their outlook on the world. Psychological research by Adlam and Gudjonsson (1983) into the personality patterns of British police officers has found notable similarities between measures of personality traits. This research showed that both probationary and experienced officers showed lower levels of impulsiveness and empathy in comparison to police recruits. These findings may well be attributed to occupational socialisation as increased experience may cause a lessening of these particular traits. Such findings may present an image of the British police officer as controlled and unfeeling, but do show clear distinctions between officers' personality traits. Hanewicz (1978: 153) therefore suggested that it might be more appropriate to describe police personality in terms of 'commonality rather than exclusivity'.

The suggestion of a police personality proposes that the cognitive tendencies of police officers may not simply be a result of on the job socialisation but also as a result of personality predispositions in those who apply for the job. Reiner (2000) suggests that those who join the police service place value on a society that promotes protection of the weak; this is supported in research by Loftus (2010:2) that officers have a 'simplistic and decontextualised understanding of criminality'. Loftus (2010) furthermore suggests that police officers have an exaggerated sense of their own role in society before they join the service, and that this image is then exacerbated by police culture. Westley (1970) postulated that a majority of the time police officers only come into contact with what they perceive to be the undesirable

section of society. This disproportionate contact leads them to hold a cynical view of all those they come into contact with despite the fact that a large majority of society consists of law-abiding citizens. It seems then that the notion of a police personality may not be unreasonable when viewed as a set of characteristics common but not necessarily exclusive to police officers (Twersky-Glasner, 2005).

When considering the notion of a police personality, it is necessary to consider how officers perceive their own identities in order to understand why the police culture has endured and why it may not be susceptible to change. Skolnick (1966:52) noted that police officers are already set apart from the conventional social world and so have a readiness to associate within their own 'occupational milieu'. Indeed Loftus' research (2010) observed expressions of self-detachment in officers, which officers believed was a result of the fact that the public did not appreciate the role they play in society or associate them with positive news. Furthermore, there is a strong sense of depersonalisation experienced by officers as a result of their uniform and often members of the public fail to recognise officers as individuals. It stands to reason that it may be difficult for community orientated policing to flourish when officers do not feel integrated with the communities they serve (Twersky-Glasner, 2005).

1.3 *The Relevance of Police Culture and the Cliché Characteristics*

As the police service attempts to align changing professional standards alongside a new reputation as a service rather than a force, scholars have begun to re-examine police culture and its potential to impact on efforts towards reform (Stenning, 2009). Community orientated policing requires a transformation of individual officers' attitudes and values, towards more proactive police work that engages the whole community, as emphasised by John Alderson in the 1980s (Brain, 2010). Waters (2000) however argues that there is little evidence so far that community orientated values have become integrated in to the police thought process, which could mean slow progress towards the desired image of the police service as an open and tolerant organisation (Davies and Thomas, 2002).

Research into police culture from the 1960s onwards has acknowledged the existence of shared occupational values and attitudes between police officers and the influence they have on their perceptions and interactions with the public (Loftus, 2010). Manning (1989:360) has provided one of the most inclusive definitions of police culture as a set of 'accepted practices, rules, and principles of conduct that are

situationally applied, and generalised rationales and beliefs'. Despite the many transitions in police practice, the characteristics that underpin a shared sense of identity between police officers have persisted (Loftus, 2010). Reiner (2000) described the core characteristics of police culture as; an action-orientated sense of mission, suspicion, machismo, conservatism, isolation, pragmatism and racial prejudice and furthermore placed emphasis on cynicism, danger and solidarity.

The job of policing is unique as police officers provide a visible representation of the law in everyday society. Police officers are ordinary individuals provided with discretionary powers to arrest, search and detain members of the public and use legitimate force in order to enact their duties (Loftus, 2010). Officers are expected to use their discretion in order to enforce the law, making them 'key decision makers' in the interaction process between the public and the criminal justice system (McLaughlin and Muncie, 2001:74). Police occupational culture has attracted particular attention because of the extent to which it has the potential to influence the actions of officers on the beat (Waddington, 1999). With an increasing emphasis on new public management (NPM) and a shift towards a more community orientated police service that seeks to treat the public in a consumerist light, characteristics such as suspicion, cynicism and solidarity could potentially hinder organisational reform (Loftus, 2010). Chan (2003) suggests efforts towards new accountability that emphasise market conditions, performance indicators and more aggressive demands for accountability may exacerbate cultural resistance. As a result officers will suffer more bureaucracy, utilise their discretion inappropriately and continue to alienate the public.

It is however important to recognise that despite the fact police culture is often described in terms of its negative impacts, some researchers have stipulated that police culture can serve a positive function (Waddington, 1999; Loftus, 2010). The implicitly taught values resulting from the occupational culture exhibited by colleagues can help officers learn how to interact with the public and how to manage their time (Loftus, 2010). Indeed Carpenter and Raza (1987) found that the police were often more psychologically healthy and less anxious than average citizens, and furthermore that they put more effort into maintaining social relationships. Waddington (1999:295) renounces the notion that police culture exists to guide actions and suggests instead that it 'gives meaning to experience and sustains occupational self-esteem'. It is important that police culture is viewed with regard to

the potential positive impacts it has for officers and not simply used a scapegoat for a range of negative attitudes and activities associated with policing (Chan, 1996).

1.4 *An Occupation or a Lifestyle? Occupational Studies*

There are several academic standpoints surrounding the existence of police culture and the extent to which it can influence action; however, the extent to which it encroaches on the social and domestic lives of officers appears to be under-represented within criminological literature. Waddington (1999) suggests that rarely do aspects of police culture 'seep out of the canteen'. However, research by Loftus (2010) emphasised a fundamental aspect of police culture, suggesting that officers view themselves as enforcers of the law regardless of whether they are working or not. Waddington (1999) argues that we should focus on the actions of officers in order to explain their behaviour, but it is arguable that an officer's awareness of their continual responsibility does have an influence over their actions and behaviours outside of the occupational environment. It seems apparent that those who view police culture as an obstacle to reform should consider the wider potential impacts of police culture.

Skolnick's (1966) research investigated how police culture could be seen to impact on domestic life. Skolnick suggested the nature of policing is unique not only because of the way in which officers are exposed to danger but furthermore because they are afforded their powers both when they are on and off duty. As a result, officers seek to avoid those who might find them intimidating or oppressive, leaving their choice of acquaintances limited (Scaramella, Cox and McCamey, 2011). Officers must maintain high levels of morality in front of their civilian audience and therefore may find social encounters with civilians particularly difficult. If they fail to do so, they risk being accused of hypocrisy by engaging in activities they would condemn in others. Police officers who do decide to socialise with civilians may even go to the extent of concealing their occupational identity in order to lead a separate social life unmarred by their work, particularly when engaging in what are often deemed acceptable social norms, for example heavy drinking (Banton, 1964).

One of the most common ways in which police culture has been shown to have an effect on officers' domestic lives is through the onset of stress (Scaramella et al, 2011). Research into Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) among police officers has found a prevalence rate of up to 13%, four to six times higher than that of the rest of society (Robinson, Sigman and Wilson, 1997). Research has attributed

increasing stress levels among police officers to an increase in public expectations, a decline in support from colleagues and a new focus on political correctness and cultural diversity (Scaramella et al, 2011). It may be that the pressure of constant monitoring over officers' conduct is a key contributor to stress (Chan, 2003). Research by Evans, Coman, Stanley and Burrows (1993) that investigated methods of coping with stress has concluded that alcoholism, authoritarianism, cynicism, depersonalisation and emotional detachment are all methods drawn on by officers in an attempt to manage their emotions.

Patterson (2003) has linked these maladaptive coping mechanisms to police culture by suggesting that officers tend to avoid emotion-focused methods of coping with stress due to occupational influences. Such influences include a tendency to rely on co-workers for emotional support in the work place and to keep things to oneself outside the occupational environment. One study by Swatt, Gibson and Piquero, (2007) looked at problematic alcohol consumption by officers as a response to stress and the use of general strain theory in explaining why this occurs (Agnew, 1992). The findings suggested that the influences of police culture such as a cynical outlook and decreased levels of social support may impede the use of positive coping mechanisms that would reduce the likelihood of problematic alcohol consumption. This may be a result of the fact that officers often fail to realise the effects police culture has on their thoughts and actions (Scaramella et al, 2011).

As mentioned previously police culture has also been implicated in problematic relations between officers and their families. Scaramella et al (2011) believed that the use of police culture as a maladaptive coping strategy for stress, for example cynicism, emotional detachment and suppression, can lead to burnout as officers learn to control and hide their emotions. Johnson, Todd and Subramanian (2005) argued that police culture can have a multitude of negative consequences for partner relationships including; inability to express emotion, excessive control at home, paranoia, over-protectiveness, an inability to help with work related problems, and even domestic violence. Kirschman (2000) believed the biggest risk to officers' families is that officers become so self-involved they alienate their families by relying too much on their colleagues for emotional support which does not provide them with adequate coping mechanisms. Scaramella et al (2011) emphasised the influence of police culture in the failure of officers to realise the effects of stress, as they learn from the culture to deal with traumatic incidents themselves, despite the fact that their emotional capabilities may not extend beyond that of many citizens who are not exposed to such pressures on a daily basis.

To conclude, much literature on police culture has focused on the potential negative impacts and has emphasised the significance of police culture as a barrier to reform, however this does little to explain why the culture persists. In addition there is evidence to suggest police culture can have an impact on the lives of officers outside of the occupational environment, especially in relation to family life and coping with certain occupational hazards.

2   Findings and Analysis

2.1   *Personal Identity*

When considering how officers viewed their role within society, the research showed that generally officers advocated a protective role. Their sense of moral mission did not appear as exaggerated as elements of the literature suggested (Loftus, 2010). Several of the officers stated that they felt their role was to help people and make them feel safe. However, this view extended outside of the work environment and many officers felt they had a responsibility to protect the public even when not on duty. This finding is supported in literature by Reiner (2000) who suggests that officers see themselves as a protective barrier between the weak and the predatory members of society. However, nearly all officers stated that a situation would have to reach a certain level of seriousness before they became involved for example one officer stated:

> I would probably be less likely to intervene with situations outside of the workplace than more so because of the consequences of what may happen if I intervened without having the back up of the police uniform and everything else and the lack of protection you would get from the organisation and the courts...I would obviously watch it and monitor it and phone it in. (Interviewee #7)

An explanation for this is offered in Skolnick's research (1966: 39) who suggested that police officers see the world through distinctive 'cognitive lenses'. Although officers viewed themselves as having a continual responsibility to the public whether on or off duty, nearly all officers mentioned the need to 'risk assess' a situation before they got involved, a factor that would not necessarily occur to someone who was not part of the police service.

Despite the fact that a majority of officers had an awareness of their duty to the public at all times, they all expressed a desire not to be identified by their occupation.

All interviewees described making a conscious effort to avoid presenting themselves as a police officer whilst off duty; one officer stated:

> It's to do with balance, and out of work, I'm out of work you know? I do all sorts of shit and that's what I do, that's me. That's it, policing is acting and it's acting the part you need to play for the particular role that you're doing. (Interviewee #3)

In addition to this, several officers described situations outside of their occupational environment where their own perceptions of themselves had clashed other peoples' perceptions of them. As noted in the literature review, officers often experience a sense of depersonalisation as a result of the uniform they wear and thus how they are viewed by the public (Loftus, 2010). This finding was illustrated by one officer who described a reaction he received when participating in a mock game show on his honeymoon:

> They said what do you do for a living? And I thought shall I say it or shall I not and I said yeah I'm a police officer, and there was a good crowd of a few hundred people and there was this chorus of boos and that is why I will always give it a second thought. I'm not afraid to say it at all but equally I know what peoples' reactions are to us and it really disappointed me. (Interviewee #2)

It is not unreasonable to suggest that people view their vocation as part of their identity; however, as evidenced by the findings, officers seem to make a conscious effort to create two separate identities in order to reduce the extent to which people define them by their occupation and the negative perceptions that surround their profession (Banton, 1964).

2.2   *Social life*

When officers were asked about the impacts of their occupation on their social life, contrary to research by Twersky-Glasner (2005) and Skolnick (1966), the findings suggested that officers did not find social interactions with non-officers particularly problematic. A majority of officers stated that they preferred to socialise with friends who were not part of the police; one officer stated:

> I'd like to say that I'm able to sustain relationships with people that aren't in the police, I don't want to be born and bred in the job, it's not who I am, it's my job and I love what I do but my life is separate. (Interviewee #4)

Officers expressed a desire not to convey themselves as having a social dependence on colleagues, suggesting they do not want their identity to be defined by their occupation. In order to explain why, it is important to recognise the potential influence of recent organisational changes on overall commitment to the police service. Metcalfe and Dick (2000) suggest that commitment to an organisation is shaped by the extent to which officers feel valued by their organisation. If organisational commitment is low, officers are less willing to exert effort on behalf of the

organisation and less committed to trying to affirm the organisational goals and values (Porter et al, 1974). Indeed, officers expressed a sense of detachment and de-motivation in relation to the police service and this may explain why they were less concerned about maintaining social relationships with colleagues. One officer stated that currently the most negative aspects of his job were the general feelings of organisational unrest and dissatisfaction:

> People aren't coping well with not having any avenues they can take, they've been put in a slot whether it be response or whatever and there's no escape from it, that is what they're doing and that is what they will be doing. (Interviewee #2)

A lack of organisational commitment among officers and reluctance to associate with colleagues may reflect the lack of support they feel the organisation has shown them in a time of upheaval. Although research has shown officers may once have had a stronger desire to associate with colleagues, the present lack of commitment to the service may lead officers to identify more with an image of themselves that does not necessarily reflect their police identity (Metcalfe and Dick, 2000).

Officers are made aware when they join the service that the organisation demands a high degree of integrity and any behaviour that may bring the service in to disrepute puts them at risk of reprimand (Metropolitan Police, 2010). A minority of officers stated that they sometimes felt obliged to leave certain social gatherings early and suggested that often their friends looked to them to set a standard of behaviour during social events. This may suggest that officers may not necessarily feel isolated in terms of being alienated, as Skolnick (1966) suggested, but highlights that they may feel pressured to interact within a social milieu that reflects the moral expectations placed upon them. In this way the police occupation does seem to have an impact on the social lives of police officers.

2.3   *Family Life*

The responses above suggest that police officers attempt to make a conscious effort not to let their role impact on their personal lives. However, there is evidence that their occupation impacts on how they perceive their own identity and the way in which they perceive others. They risk assess their social interactions as well as other peoples' perceptions of them. These findings also appear to extend in to their family relationships and there was evidence that police culture did have an impact on this area. A large number of officers did not have partners who were in the police service and although their opinions may have been slightly biased by their own personal situations, most officers stated in interview that they preferred having a partner who

was not part of the police. The main reason given was that they felt not having a partner in the service gave them some space from the work environment.

Although officers expressed that they did not find confidentiality issues a problem in terms of being able to discuss work with their partners, it was clear that officers relied more on work colleagues for emotional support. Furthermore, a majority of officers advocated exercise as the best method to deal with stress which links to research by Patterson (2003) who suggested that officers avoid emotion-focused methods of coping with stress. Contrary to literature by Scaramella et al (2011) officers did not feel that they were expected to deal with emotional situations themselves and often said that de-briefing with colleagues was the best way to deal with emotional or challenging shifts. However, none of the officers mentioned that they would talk to their partner or family member in order to relieve stress. Research by Swatt, Gibson and Piquero (2007) has shown that cultural factors such as an over-reliance on colleagues can impede the use of positive coping mechanisms to deal with stress and can lead to maladaptive coping mechanisms such as alcoholism. Indeed, there was evidence in the research that some older officers did advocate alcohol as a way of relaxing after a particularly stressful shift.

The fact that officers relied more on colleagues than family members for emotional support may be linked to the fact that officers felt the need to protect their families from the true nature of their occupation; one officer stated:

> There is a massive underworld, which normal members of the public and members of your family just aren't aware of, and yeah it definitely opens your eyes up but they don't need to know about that, it's better not to tell them what dangers you can be placed in. (Interviewee #4)

A link can be made here between the notion that officers view themselves as working for one section of society and against another (Loftus, 2010). Officers are provided with a disproportionate view of society as they regularly interact with its less desirable members. A reluctance to offload work stress on family members might be attributed to the fact that officers are trying to protect them from the negative side of society they continually interact with (Westley, 1970). Most of the officers felt that if their family members had a more realistic perception of what they did on a daily basis they would be more concerned for their safety.

The findings suggested that officers prioritised time with their families over their work as well as over finding time to socialise. Although some officers stated that the shift pattern occasionally made finding time for the family difficult, a majority of officers

stated that this had never been an issue for them as they always prioritised family events. Younger officers in particular expressed the importance of prioritising family relations above anything else. Older male officers however expressed less of a tendency to prioritise family members over work. One older male officer stated:

> People react to you differently if they know you're a police officer, even your own family... in my case one of my brothers I've really fallen out with big time because of my job basically and his opinions on it and the fact that I can't put up with that, so yeah it majorly has an impact on your life because of your job. (Interviewee #3).

Although officers expressed a desire not to prioritise work over family, there was evidence that this does occur. These differences can potentially be linked back to literature relating to organisational commitment by Metcalfe and Dick (2000). Older officers with longer periods of service may be more committed to their work and therefore are more likely to exert effort on behalf of the organisation, which potentially leads family relationships to suffer as a result (Porter, 1974).

The findings in this section have suggested that although officers do not feel the need to control and hide their emotions on a continual basis as suggested by Scaramella et al (2011) they are much more likely to rely on their work colleagues for emotional support. Although officers recognised the importance of prioritising their family over their occupation, there was evidence to show that this was not always the case, which links to research by Scaramella et al (2011) who suggested that officers may fail to see the effects police culture has on their thoughts and actions.

2.4   *Living Environment*

The final area for discussion relates to the general environment in which police officers are required to live and work and what evidence there is to suggest that police culture affects officers' perceptions of their general locality. The findings showed that officers' perceptions of their working environment were affected by the knowledge they possessed as an officer and that it was almost impossible to alter that perception when they were off duty (Skolnick, 1966). This finding supports the notion that officers have a disproportionate view of the negative aspects of society due to the frequency in which they come into contact with them. This then causes them to develop a cynical opinion of all members of the public they come in to contact with (Westley, 1970). However, there was also evidence that these cynicisms were not just apparent whilst officers were on patrol. In fact several officers expressed that they would not choose to live in an area that they policed and some officers expressed that they avoided that area altogether outside of work. A majority

of officers also expressed a tendency to socialise at the houses of friends or colleagues rather than in public establishments such as restaurants or bars.

The reasons for avoiding these areas tended to be a negative perception of the area or concerns that they would come into contact with offenders or victims. One officer stated:

> I lived in (Place A) and I've lived in (Place B) and (Place C) and I had no issues in any of those areas before I was in the police but now there's no way I'd live in any of the streets I lived in before which is quite strange really because I didn't have any problems there, I wasn't a victim of crime, I had no issues at all, but you just see so much more when you're in this job. (Interviewee #5)

The data presented supports research by Twersky-Glasner (2005) who suggested that often officers do not feel integrated within the communities they serve. In addition to this, research by Loftus (2010) suggested that officers are suspicious towards every aspect of the police environment because of the constant potential for danger, and this may go some way to explaining why officers choose to avoid the area they police outside of work, finding it difficult to switch off from work.

To conclude, the main findings from this research have shown that there is evidence of police culture impacting on the social and domestic lives of officers. Although there is evidence that officers made a conscious effort to resist occupational influences on their personal lives, often their awareness of the negative perceptions that surround their occupation, and the contrast between their self-perceived identity and potentially negative public perceptions of them, lead officers to try and create two separate identities. This separation may reflect a desire to try and limit the effects of these negative associations on their personal lives. The research has provided evidence to suggest that officers have a tendency to avoid emotion-focused methods of coping with stress and that any emotional support was much more likely to come from colleagues rather than family members; however, it is difficult to draw conclusions about the extent to which this affected family relationships (Kirschman, 2000). Finally there was evidence that police officers have a negative perception of their locality as a result of their occupation and furthermore that they sought to avoid such areas outside of their working hours. This may reflect the fact that officers find it difficult to switch off in their working environment but also the degree of separation officers feel between themselves and the communities they police (Twersky-Glasner, 2005).

Conclusion

The key areas of social and domestic life that the literature review suggested police culture had an impact upon were identified as personal identity, social life, family life and living environment. This article aimed to consolidate those areas in order to develop a coherent picture of the extent to which police culture impacted on officers' lives, as this was an area in which a gap in the literature had been identified. The key findings that were drawn from the research process suggest that police culture does have a significant impact on the social and domestic lives of officers. In relation to their personal identity, officers often sought to separate their occupational and personal identities, yet the findings suggested that the former did have an effect on the latter. Furthermore, attempts to treat these two aspects as separate consequently impacted on other aspects of domestic life; for example, when considering the findings in relation to the social lives of officers (contrary to what literature suggests) officers did not necessarily seek to interact with colleagues or find social interactions with non-police officers particularly difficult (Skolnick, 1966).

In fact, attempts to separate their occupational and personal lives appeared to encourage them to put increasing effort in to maintaining relationships with non-police officers. However, officers were aware of how their social milieu could have an adverse affect on their credibility as an officer and often concealed their identity in anticipation of a negative reaction. This finding was also evident in relation to family relationships. The key finding in this area was that officers did advocate a greater reliance upon colleagues than family members for emotional support; additionally, emotion-focused approaches were not the primary method of coping with stress. This finding was supported in literature by Kirschman (2000). However, the findings did not suggest that police officers alienated their family as a result.

Officers did express a sense of loyalty to their family over their occupation even if this did not always seem to be the case in reality. Evidence of the fact that officers attempted to separate their occupational and personal identities was also apparent in the findings relating to their general living environment. Officers expressed difficulties in switching off from work, particularly when they were in an area they policed and many sought to avoid it outside of their occupational hours. This finding was particularly significant in relation to literature that suggested officers perceive their environment in a unique and distinctive way (Skolnick, 1966). Overall, the findings outlined in this article have highlighted the extensive influence of cultural factors in

relation to the occupation of policing and the potential impact they can have outside of the occupational environment.

The small scale of this research has obvious limitations on the generalizability of the findings and, as a result, they cannot be considered representative of all police officers. Moreover, the sample used was not representative of gender or rank and future research in this area would therefore benefit from a larger scale study in order to provide a more representative illustration of the ways in which the personal lives of officers are impacted upon by police culture. Notwithstanding these limitations, the findings from this study suggest that police culture not only has an impact on police officers inside the occupational environment but also on their personal lives. The extensive body of research and literature examining police culture has emphasised the extent to which it undermines police-community relations and reform within the police service (Holdaway, 1983). Further research in to this area may therefore be beneficial in order to recognise the powerful influence of policing as an occupation and the potential pressures and impact it can have on the lives of officers.

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